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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1604
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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 001793

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP, EAP/ANP, DRL
NSC FOR D. WALTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [ID](#) [AS](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: AS MIGRANT FLOWS INCREASE, GOI AND AUSTRALIA
COOPERATE ON WAYS TO DEAL WITH SITUATION

REF: A. CANBERRA 945
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 988 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The GOI has intercepted another group of Sri Lankan migrants traveling by boat in Indonesian waters. The GOI is detaining the migrants, who were on their way to Australia. These 78 migrants join 255 Sri Lankans who are being held by the Indonesian government after their boat was intercepted in mid-October. Indonesia and Australia continue to work on ways to deal with the situation. The GOI appreciates the Australian assistance, which includes funding, but full modalities are not yet in place to deal with the increasing flow of migrants. END SUMMARY.

GOI INTERCEPTS MORE MIGRANTS

[1](#)2. (U) The GOI has intercepted another group of Sri Lankan migrants traveling by boat in Indonesian waters. The 78 migrants were attempting to make their way to Australia. The GOI is detaining the migrants--all of whom appear to be of Tamil ethnicity--in the Riau Islands area of Sumatra.

[1](#)3. (U) On October 12, the Indonesian navy intercepted 255 Sri Lankan migrants traveling in a cargo ship to Australia. The migrants were forced to port and are currently being held in western Java near Jakarta. (Note: Another large group of Sri Lankans arrived in Indonesia earlier this year. This group, numbering 55, arrived in Aceh, Sumatra, in May. The GOI has intercepted many other migrants this year coming from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Burma, and African countries.)

GOI WORKING WITH AUSTRALIA

[1](#)4. (C) Indonesia and Australia are working on the migrant problem. Officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs (Deplu) told poloff that the GOI has agreed to provide "temporary accommodations" to both groups of Sri Lankans. Deplu also told us that the Indonesian government was working in coordination with the Australian government on ways to deal with the arrivals and staunch the flow. Following recent discussions between President Yudhoyono and Australian Prime Minister Rudd, the GOI agreed on a preliminary mechanism to deal with the issue of "irregular" migrants. Deplu said that the Australians agreed to fund the development of facilities in Indonesia to house and process migrants' claims in an orderly and humanitarian manner. Australia would also assist Indonesia in locating migrant boats and in sea patrols. In return, Indonesia would bolster its anti-trafficking efforts and ratchet up sea patrols to mitigate the flow of migrants in Australia-bound migrant

boats.

15. (U) The International Organization on Migration (IOM) has been given unrestricted access to both groups of Sri Lankan migrants. IOM is providing food and also serving as a mediator between the migrants and GOI officials.

INDONESIA WANTS TO COOPERATE BUT NEEDS ASSISTANCE

16. (C) The GOI is very concerned about the situation and wants to cooperate internationally on ways to deal with the increase in migrant flows. At this point, consultations with the Australians have been productive with both sides agreeing that they need to work together. Indonesia as a developing country is counting on international assistance to deal with the problem and Australia has promised funding and technical support. The joint discussions are taking place under the rubric of the Bali Process and the Lombok Treaty which set out guidelines for the two countries' cooperation. That said, the problem is increasing in scope and the Indonesian-Australian response will need to be further coordinated and ramped up.

HUME